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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 1942

SUBJECT: "CHEESE--A VICTORY FOOD SPECIAL." Information from agricultural marketing specialists of the U.S.Department of Agriculture.

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Remember cheese when you're planning menus these summer days. Remember cheese because it can make your meals easier, more delicious, more nourishing and more economical. And remember cheese because you'll help your country's food situation right now by buying it instead of other foods that are scarce, or needed for shipping to our armies and allies. Right now cheese is so plentiful, that it has been nominated a Victory Food Special for the period from August 17 through August 29. You probably know this already from notices in your grocery store. The cows of this country have done such a job producing milk that at present we have the largest stocks of cheese in the Nation's history. And the Department of Agriculture is asking homemakers to serve their families more cheese.

Up to now all the Victory Food Specials designated by the Agricultural Marketing Administration have been fresh fruit or vegetables. So you may be surprised to learn that a dairy product is now featured as one of our abundant foods. Naturally, you want to know why. Well, the story of cheese goes around in circles and finally lands back on the shoulders of the dairymen and the cows forming part of America's line of defense on the home front. Let's start back to March 1941 when the British needed food to continue their fight for freedom. That was before Pearl Harbor, you will recall. British representatives came to the United States to see what foods we could supply. They asked for 250 million pounds of cheese a year because cheese is such a nourishing food. This seemed like a large order. It was 40 percent of all the cheese this country produced. But the dairymen took the question up with their cows. And the cows said: "Okay, Boss. Give us the feed and we'll supply the milk." Since then the production of cheese has almost doubled. Not long ago, when the Department of Agriculture began to take stock, it announced that cheese stocks have reached an all-time peak. Since March 1941 the Agricultural Marketing Administration has bought almost 400 million pounds of American cheese. About 262 million pounds are now in storage. Our problem now is using the abundance of cheese on hand at the present time.

Milk production cannot be turned off and on like drawing a tub of water. The dairymen have worked hard to get their cows up to present production. It would be dangerous for future food demands if now they started cutting down on production even though the country doesn't need more cheese right at the moment. No one can predict what future demands may be. Within the next few months our own armed forces may call for much more cheese. And the United Nations, instead of asking for 250 million pounds a year, may soon be asking for 350 million pounds annually. As soon as the ships have more space to carry cheese, more cheese will be shipped.

The dairymen and their cows have done a great job in stepping up production of cheese to the present supply. Now that the country happens to have a big supply of cheese on hand, let's make the most of it. Let's use it in place of other foods that are short. Let's use cheese to keep marketing channels open so that dairymen will get a fair price for their products and continue their good work. We must keep a plentiful supply of milk and milk products in America.

The Department of Agriculture looks to homemakers as the most important group in managing the country's food--and in deciding what foods will be on the markets from day to day, week to week, month to month. If you buy foods that are abundant, you not only keep these foods from going to waste. You also ease the demand on scarce foods. Shortages of certain foods are bound to occur from time to time during a war. Your way to help is to use the plentiful foods instead of the short foods, to use the foods that are at the peak of supply or are perishable, and let other foods go to our armed forces and allies.

For example, right now you might very well serve a cheese dish as the main dish at dinner. You not only help your country's food situation when you buy cheese, but you also help yourself and your pocketbook. Cheese offers a great deal of nourishment and flavor at low cost. And a good cheese dish can be the makings of a meatless meal. Our supply of meat is and will continue to be short for a while. But you can call on cheese.

You can make almost any vegetable extra good by adding cheese sauce--just plain white sauce with grated or sliced cheese melted in it. You can also use cheese or cheese sauce with bland foods like macaroni, spaghetti, rice, bread and potatoes. Scalloped vegetables baked in the oven are extra good with grated cheese over the top Try a dish of macaroni, cabbage and cheese some time. It's an inexpensive main dish--and a delicious one. Boil spaghetti until tender. Shave up fresh cabbage. Put a layer of cabbage in the bottom of a baking dish, then a layer of spaghetti, then cheese sauce, and so on until the dish is full. Cover the top with buttered bread crumbs. Bake about 20 minutes in a moderate oven.

You can add to the flavor of almost any cheese mixture with onion juice, chopped parsley, celery salt and tabasco sauce.

Another good main dish is eggs baked in cheese sauce--or eggs baked in tomato sauce with grated cheese over the top. Then, of course,,there's always the old favorite and very thrifty dish--just plain macaroni or spaghettti or rice baked with cheese.

Cheese never needs long hard cooking. All it usually needs is just melting over low heat. Too much heat makes cheese tough and stringy. You make the most of cheese by cooking it properly and seasoning it carefully. It's economical, requires very little time or fuel in cooking, combines well with most vegetables and gives flavor to low cost foods.

And right now it's a Victory Special because the country has so much of it.

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